



ANITA M. BOCK
Director

County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

November 1, 2001

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: 
Anita M. Bock, Director
Department of Children and Family Services

Michael J. Henry
Director of Personnel

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SEPTEMBER 25, 2001 MOTION: VENTURA COUNTY'S JOB-TO-CAREER PROGRAM

On September 25, 2001, your Board, in a motion by Mayor Antonovich, ordered that the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Personnel examine Ventura County's Job-to-Career Program to develop staff for careers in social work and report back to the Board in thirty days on the suitability of developing a similar program in Los Angeles County. We have contacted Ventura County's Human Services Agency, evaluated their program and developed recommendations about the feasibility of a program for this County. The following is our report in response to this Board order.

Ventura County Social Work Education Program Highlights

The Ventura County Human Services Agency Employee Job-to-Career Program was developed in response to a need to provide a career path for its clerical employees and to enhance the recruitment and retention of its social work staff. The program consists of community college classes resulting in a Human Services Certificate. The twenty-seven credits required for certification can also be used towards an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree. These units can also be transferred to local universities towards a Bachelor's degree.

It should be noted that the minimum requirements for professional social work positions remain the same; this program does not guarantee a promotion to a position. Students who complete the Associate of Arts degree will still be required to complete, at a minimum, a Bachelor's degree and may continue their education and obtain an

accredited Master's degree in social work. The program does, however, provide easier access to basic college preparatory classroom education and internship opportunities in the social work field.

Classes are offered on-site at various agency locations and at three community college campuses. The curriculum developed covers theoretical areas and topics such as psychology, sociology, skills building classes in interviewing, counseling and case management. Employees also receive an opportunity to apply their newly learned skills while completing an internship with the agency.

Ventura's Human Services Agency supports the clerical staff by allowing flexible work schedules and providing textbook and tuition reimbursement. The staff receive mileage and travel time to the class. The Agency also operates a lending library to help meet the educational requirements of the program. The program is centrally coordinated through the Human Services Agency's Staff Development Division.

Recommendations to Model Ventura County's Job-to-Career Program

Recognizing the need for additional, well-trained human service professionals within the Department of Children and Family Services as well as throughout other human service agencies in Los Angeles County, we are recommending a similar plan be initiated.

The Department of Children and Family Services already has a significant educational advancement program in place for preparing social workers to practice in child welfare. Currently our program works collaboratively with local universities in providing internship opportunities, flexible work schedules, educational leaves and financial support at the Bachelor's and Master's of Social Work level. An educational advancement program for clerical staff will complete the educational continuum.

The proposed program for the Department of Children and Family Services will mirror many of the successful strategies of the Ventura County Program. The following outlines the design, structure and implementation plan for the program:

- The Department of Children and Family Services will initiate a Tuition Reimbursement Program following the guidelines set forth in the Los Angeles County Code. This program will cover the cost of tuition. The Department may explore the possibility of reimbursement for textbooks as outlined in the County Code.
- The Department of Children and Family Services will partner with Community Colleges as the primary vehicle for delivery of educational services. Preliminary discussions with Long Beach City College have been initiated. The College currently has a Human Services Certificate Program. They expressed readiness and commitment to taking a leadership role within the education sector and working with our Department in customizing a program tailored to the needs of our employees. Additional community colleges throughout the County will be included as educational providers based on the County's needs and the college's interest in participating.

- The Human Services Certificate Program will be designed to include a wide range of both required and elective courses that will include topics such as: Introduction to Social Work and Psychology, Child Abuse, Interviewing and Counseling, Case Management, Group Work and Crisis Intervention, Race and Ethnic Relations, Domestic Violence, Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Juvenile Law and Child Development.
- The Department of Children and Family Services will survey Departmental clerical staff to assess interest and willingness to participate. Emancipated foster youth, working for the Department, will be especially targeted for inclusion in this program.
- The Department of Children and Family Services will design a program that is countywide, community-based, flexible, and responsive to the needs of participants. Flexible work hours will be offered to the participants to support their attendance.
- The Department of Children and Family Services will provide internship experiences within the Department that will enhance the educational curriculum. This internship will include a mentoring/tutoring program.

Prerequisites for Successful Implementation

Successful implementation and maintenance of this program requires a highly collaborative approach and centralized coordination and monitoring as well as financial support.

- The Department of Children and Family Services recognizes that the shortage of human services professionals extends into related fields outside of child protection. To maximize the benefits of the program for the entire County, the Department of Children and Family Services will solicit partnerships with the Departments of Mental Health, Health Services, Probation and Public Social Services. Clerical staff from those departments will be invited to participate with the Department of Children and Family Services staff in this innovative educational advancement program.
- Staff will be surveyed for interest and areas of highest need (topics and locations) will be identified. (Per the community college, a minimum of 25 participants is needed to schedule a class.) Once the areas of highest interest have been determined, specific class sites will be negotiated.
- Curriculum will be tailored to meet the specific needs of the staff of participating departments. The program will be designed to be adaptable and the structure will be user-friendly.
- Budgetary and staffing needs will be assessed and determined. Additional budgetary requirements will be identified and a method to meet those demands initiated. This program will be managed within the Department of Children and Family Services,

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Staff Development Division. This Division currently contains the Training Section, Clinical Licensure Program and the Social Work Internship Program. These existing programs already contain a structure that can support a portion of the design and implementation requirements of this new Job-to-Career Program.

The new Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Human Services Job-to-Career Program, will complement the existing Department of Children and Family Services Social Work Internship Program, Clinical Supervision Program and the Department of Children and Family Services/Inter-University Consortium Training and Stipend Program. This fully integrated series of programs will provide staff in human services focused departments with a comprehensive continuum of education and staff development opportunities.

The Department of Human Resources concurs with this analysis, and supports further exploration of the feasibility of developing this program. If implemented, the program would be advertised in the County's Training Academy website to attract clerical employees in other departments interested in this developmental opportunity. The new Job-to-Career Program will not only enhance the career opportunities for clerical employees but will also benefit the Department of Children and Family Services, other participating human services departments, and the County in general. It will increase the pool of prospective Children's Social Workers and other human service focused staff, attract and retain in County service persons of superior ability and potential for advancement, encourage skill acquisition resulting in increased workforce and service excellence, and increase employee morale and job satisfaction.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call Anita Bock or your staff may call Michelle Saulters at (213) 351-5786.

AMB:EH
TP:tp

c: Chief Administrative Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel